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ABSTRACT

The current role and status of the teaching of English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) in Venezuela is discussed, and it is maintained that, in addition to being necessary as a medium for information exchange with the technically advanced countries, English has also assumed an important role in communications between Venezuela and other developing nations. The Venezuelan educational system is briefly described, and the role of English in the system is explained at the pre-school, basic, middle diversified, and higher educational levels. The training of ESL teachers in Venezuela is also described at the various levels of teacher preparation, including such topics as in-service training and postgraduate level training; the teaching of English literature; and materials support, including availability of materials, educational texts, and other resources. Educational administration is discussed as it relates to the teaching of ESL, and the future of English within the Venezuelan educational system is described. The teaching of ESL outside the educational system, in both private schools and in language schools, is described, and British and American support organizations for the teaching of ESL are listed. The role of creative writing is also discussed. Current research initiatives are cited, and a short bibliography is provided. (DJD)

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English Teaching Profile
Venezuela
January 1989

1 The role and status of English

Although English fulfils no official function within Venezuelan society, it is by far the foremost foreign language in the country. Its pre-eminence dates from the exploitation of the oilfields by American (and the Dutch-British Shell) companies after the turn of the century. Since then, the increasing economic links with the United States have ensured a growing demand for the language and have also resulted in the predominance of an American accent among Venezuelan speakers of English. Yet there is a high regard for British English, often based on the myth that it is somehow superior to other varieties of English.

English is principally used in Venezuela as a medium for international communication in business, commerce and for the exchange of information in science and technology. It is also of considerable importance in the academic world and among intellectuals and artists generally. The number of actual English speakers in all these fields is not an accurate indicator of the total number of users of the language: many professionals who rarely need to speak English can nevertheless read it quite fluently, especially in their subject areas.

Apart from its necessary use as a medium for information exchange with the technologically advanced countries, English has also assumed an important role in communications between Venezuela and other developing nations, both English and non-English speaking. This is particularly noticeable in international bodies such as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Organization of American States, but it is also a result of newly-forged bilateral links in the politico-economic sphere with Caribbean countries. State visits have been made to the region, including to Guyana with whom Venezuela has a border dispute. In addition, there has been a recent surge of English-speaking tourists to Venezuela from the West Indies and North America, encouraged by the favourable exchange rate.

The high status of English is illustrated by the fact that most upper-class Venezuelans encourage bilingualism in their children. In fact, several of the leading Venezuelan families are American-Venezuelan or Anglo-Venezuelan. The snob-value attached to the ability to speak English is evidenced by the daily newspaper advertisements for language courses. Thus, English is both a symbol of and a tool for upward mobility: an important stepping-stone for promotion to managerial posts in Venezuelan firms, and essential in multi-national banking and finance companies. Bilingual secretaries are in great demand and highly

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paid, while there is a growing market for translators and interpreters. Many Venezuelans still look to North America (and to a lesser extent to Europe) for their postgraduate qualifications, despite an increase in the availability of these courses inside the country. The literary community, while having little occasion to write in English, is on the whole well-read in British and American literature, and new books in these fields are reviewed in the newspapers and specialist journals.

The country's only English-language newspaper, The Daily Journal, has a relatively small readership (by no means all retailers stock it) but is well-established, its thirty-two years of circulation making it older than most Venezuelan dailies. It is principally directed at an American audience, but is sufficiently wide-ranging to interest the European reader. The rest of the English reading material available from the newspaper kiosks comes in the form of specialist magazines covering hobbies, the professions, and trade. These are invariably imported, though the daily Business in Venezuela, is produced locally by the Venezuelan-American Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Many of the programmes on the four TV channels are imported from both the USA and the UK, but these are invariably dubbed, as are most home videos. Films in the cinema, on the other hand, are shown with subtitles in Spanish. Pop music in English has an enthusiastic audience but its former dominance of several radio stations has been restricted by the application of the 'one-to-one' regulation (fifty per cent of songs broadcast must be by Latin American artists). At least one station, Radio Libertador, devotes a couple of hours to locally produced programmes in English, consisting mainly of music, while the BBC World Service can be picked up on a good receiver, as can certain Caribbean transmissions. The most likely future increase of English in the media may be for satellite programmes presently only available to the wealthier sections of society.

2 English within the education system

General outline of the education system

Before discussing English in schools and higher education institutions, it is necessary to explain how the Venezuelan education system itself works and to outline the major differences betweeen the Venezuelan and British systems.

One important difference is the high proportion of students in private education compared to Britain, averaging fifteen per cent throughout the Venezuelan system (see Appendix 1). Generally speaking, private schools tend to be better equipped than state schools, though this is not necessarily the case at the higher education level.

Another point of contrast is that the Venezuelan system is more highly centralized than the British one, with the Ministry of Education controlling the whole of the educational process. In primary and secondary education this control includes the design of the overall curriculum and specification of syllabus content, whilst in tertiary level institutions the authorities are appointed directly by the Ministry except in the five autonomous universities (and, of course, in the private sector).

A further difference lies in the entry and cut-off points. Basic school (Escuela básica), entered officially at the age of seven (though many children in fact start first grade earlier) and composed of nine one-year levels, is the only compulsory stage. However, any non-manual employment requires at least the baccalaureate qualification (Bachillerato) which is also necessary for entrance to higher education and consists of two (or in the technical area, three) years of further study at school. University and

teacher-training courses last five years, the first two of which are regarded as equivalent to A-level by British, but not Venezuelan, academic authorities.

Since the Venezuelan system demands that a subject at one level must be passed before a student can take the subject at the next level, there is considerable repetition of subjects at all stages of education.

Diagram 1: Outline of the Venezuelan education system

Level	Age-range	Years of study	Certificate obtained
Pre-Escolar (pre-school)	3 - 6	3	
Escuela basica (equivalent to primary school and first years of secondary)	7 - 15	9 1st cycle: 1-3 2nd cycle: 4-6 3rd cycle: 7-9	Certificado de Educacion Basica
Educacion media diversificada (equivalent to last years of secondary school)	16 - 17	2 - 3	Bachillerato in: a) Sciences b) Humanities c) Commercial studies d) Technical studies
Educacion superior (tertiary level)	18+		
a) Universities		5	Licenciatura
b) Institutos pedagogicos (teacher-training university institutes)		5	Profesor
c) Institutos tecnologicos		3	Tecnico
d) Colegios universitarios		3	Tecnico

Pre-school education has undergone expansion and student numbers have surpassed those of a decade ago. This growth is a response both to the needs of the urban working mother and to the increased importance attached to this level by educationalists. It was particularly encouraged during the previous Christian Democrat government (1979-84) through the Ministry of Intelligence which promoted a series of activities, especially teacher training, designed to stimulate early intellectual development. Expansion continues, though the present government has eliminated the controversial Intelligence Ministry and left pre-schooling in the hands of the Ministry of Education, in terms of both policy and organization.

Basic school consists of three three-year cycles, each designed to achieve particular aims, the general characteristics of which can be deduced from the official labels **instrumental** (1st-3rd grade), **consolidación** (4th-6th grade) and **independización** (7th-9th grade). New curricula specifying pedagogical objectives, subject content and - to a certain extent - instructional methods, have been introduced over the last few years and are now in operation in all schools. The principal aim of these reforms is to prepare school-leavers for direct entry into the workforce as useful members of the

community. Critics argue that this aim is not being achieved, that the didactic content is repetitive, that staff are inadequately trained to teach the syllabuses, have a corresponding lack of appropriate instructional material available, and that insufficient allowance has been made for regional and socio-economic variations.

It is estimated that between five and ten per cent of pupils stay on at school (Educación media diversificada) after basic school to gain their baccalaureate. Students are usually fifteen or sixteen years old on entry to this stage. If they intend to go on to higher education, they will normally choose humanities or science options. Students not going on to higher education take commercial or technical courses. There has been no modification as yet to the traditional curriculum.

The universities account for about seventy-five per cent of the student population at the tertiary level in Venezuela. Tertiary institutions comprise the older autonomous universities (whose main authorities are elected by the respective university community), the newer experimental institutions and the private sector. Degrees are professionally oriented rather than being purely academic. The teacher-training colleges have the status of university institutes. It is planned to link all these under the Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador (UPEL), with increased uniformity in curricular matters; this move is receiving some opposition from certain groups within the institutions themselves, who fear the loss of local power to a central authority. The biggest impulse towards expansion is in the area of the polytechnics, technical and university colleges, both as a means to making Venezuela more independent in the technological field and in order to take some of the pressure off the universities. Another high-growth area is postgraduate studies, especially since the economic crisis has not made it viable to send large numbers of students abroad on scholarships.

The astonishing rise in numbers of students and institutions at the tertiary level since 1965 is partly the result of Venezuela's rapid and continuing transformation into a modern, democratic, industrialized nation; it is also due to the enormous (compared to the UK) value ascribed to the possession of a university degree, seen as synonymous with socio-economic advancement. This had resulted in overcrowded facilities, insufficient material resources, a lack of qualified teachers and a high drop-out rate among the students. Nevertheless, several of these institutions achieve remarkably high standards - for example Venezuelan students pursuing postgraduate studies abroad usually perform well.

The whole of the tertiary level of education is in line for reform under a new higher education law, the principal aim of which is to rationalize a system that has undergone a somewhat uncoordinated development. However, some aspects of this reform are being strongly challenged in the academic world.

Adult and vocational education cover a wide range of different courses and institutions. Evening classes (parasistemas) in the stages leading to the baccalaureate are in great demand, while an enormous variety of activities from academic and technical subjects to crafts and more esoteric fields is on offer. The Instituto Nacional de Cooperación Educativa (INCE) provides apprenticeship training in manual, semi-technical and clerical skills as well as being heavily involved in literacy campaigns. It is also worth mentioning that education for mature students (androgogia) is catching on with the recent creation of the Universidad de la Tercera Edad.

English in the System

The importance given to English in Venezuelan society, is reflected in the educational system. Indeed, it is the only foreign language taught in basic

school (apart from a handful of private schools), while at the middle diversified stage its only rival, French, is on the verge of elimination if the Ministry of Education pushes through its current proposals. If this happens, the predominance of English over other foreign languages will be further enhanced in higher education too, since the majority of language departments in universities and teacher-training institutes exist primarily to prepare teachers for the school system.

Pre-school

At this level English is only taught in private schools, most of which are located in the major cities. Because pre-schooling falls outside the obligatory stage of education, it is possible for pre-schools to offer programmes outside the regular syllabuses (see section 7). Thus English is not only taught in private sector kindergartens but is, in some cases, actually the medium of instruction.

Basic school

In the official curriculum, English is introduced in the third and final cycle of basic school (grades 7-9): there are over 750,000 thirteen to fifteen year olds learning the language at present. In private schools, however, many younger students in the first two cycles receive more English tuition than is specified by the Ministry's curriculum. Four hours of English per week is normal, which ranks it with the other major subjects in the curriculum.

The Ministry has laid down a new English programme for the third cycle of basic school. This is the result of several years' work by successive teams of teachers, including representatives from the universities and teacher-training institutions. The syllabus is designed along the lines of current communicative-functional models and on the whole compares favourably with programmes in other countries; misgivings have been expressed, however, by the original design team over the lack of a reading skills focus, due to the overall orientation at this cycle towards preparing students for careers. More immediate problems have arisen in the implementation of the programme due to the average secondary school teacher's lack of training in communicative methodology (see section 3) and to the inappropriateness of existing materials (see section 4). However, those who have had experience of foreign language teaching in both Venezuela and the UK feel that the former is achieving comparatively acceptable results in this field: on paper, the ninth-grader reaches a level of proficiency equivalent to, or even a little beyond, the threshold level. In practice, of course, standards vary widely; these depend mainly on the individual teachers involved, a factor in turn partly determined by region: the more remote rural areas for example, are less likely to attract qualified staff.

Middle diversified level

With the possible exception of French (for humanities courses only) as discussed above, English is the sole compulsory foreign language for students taking humanities, science and commerce options in the Baccalaureate. The situation for the technical option is less clear: English is certainly the only foreign language taught but confusion exists over its compulsory status.

The syllabus established in the sixties is still in operation but the first steps have been taken by the Ministry in the direction of changing course content to provide more of a continuity with the new basic programme. Meetings with school teachers and supervisors are being held to discuss possible reforms. The most likely modification will be a greater concentration on reading skills from an English for specific purposes (ESP) perspective, given

that many students at this level are aiming to go on to higher education, especially in the scientific and technological fields. Indeed, there are indications that some teachers, notably recent graduates, are already taking the initiative in this respect - and, inevitably, are coming up against the problem of having to create their own materials.

Higher education

As mentioned earlier, most students taking English as a major subject in higher education are training to become teachers; their position is discussed fully in section 3. One major exception is the Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV) School of Modern Languages which also offers a degree in translation and interpreting: students wishing to graduate as teachers from the school now have to take a pedagogical component in the School of Education in addition to their regular modern languages degree. Aside from trainee teachers and translator-interpreters, the main area of language teaching at the tertiary level is in instrumental English.

During their studies, a large proportion of the estimated half a million higher education students will be involved in such courses, these courses are either compulsory or optional. Generally speaking, entrance requirements are laid down by faculty departments and there is considerable variation across the board. For example, international studies students at the UCV are required to follow six semesters in either English or French (about eighty per cent choose the former), while one year of English is compulsory for all students at both the Universidad Simón Bolivar (USB) and the Instituto Universitario Tecnológico Experimental (IUTE). The most common pattern is a couple of semesters of compulsory English, followed by one or more advanced courses, offered as options. Three hours of English a week is the average in most institutions.

The content and level of these courses again varies enormously. If English is compulsory and taken at the beginning of the degree, it is often taught in the form of a remedial general English course. The sentence-by-sentence translation of subject-specific texts is another common approach. On the other hand, there are examples of well-designed reading skills courses, with the material taken from the students' subject areas and used by the teacher as the basis for activities to attack particular weak points. Generally speaking, students do attain basic reading skills in their fields and are able to use English texts for information purposes.

At the MA level, a reading knowledge of one foreign langauge (two for PhD) is a prerequisite for all students, who have to take an examination in the subject prior to submission of the thesis. English predominates, but French or another language may be chosen if appropriate to the field of study. Students who do not meet the requirements often take private classes to bring themselves up to standard (postgraduate courses in English as a major subject are discussed in section 3).

In the arts faculties, English literature is nearly always studied in translation, though individuals sometimes read texts in the original if their knowledge of English is proficient.

The wide range of possibilities for English tuition is fully discussed in section 7. Within the state system the parasistemas evening classes provide English tuition where the basic school English syllabus is followed. It is also worth mentioning the Open University (Universidad Nacional Abierta known as UNA). Once again functional English forms part of some of the syllabuses.

3 Teachers of English

Training of language teachers

To graduate as a teacher of English a student must follow a five-year course of study in a department of modern languages at a university or teacher training university institute. The course of study includes the development of language skills, language description and analysis, socio-cultural background and literature, language teaching theory and methodology, general pedagogical subjects and teaching practice. The Instituto Universitario Pedagógico de Caracas (IUPC) syllabus outlined in Appendix 2 gives an idea of the ground covered by these courses of study. An indication of their comprehensive range lies in the fact that students who go on to postgraduate courses abroad in applied linguistics often find that they have already touched on much of the subject matter. Programmes are revised periodically in the light of changing attitudes to teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL).

In general, graduates reach a fairly high level of language proficiency, are acquainted with current language teaching methodologies and techniques, and have read representative twentieth century writers in English. A large proportion of high calibre graduates become university teachers, usually after a period of further study and training. It is estimated that three to four hundred students graduate each year as English teachers; the IUPC has trained over 1,500 in the last thirty years. Appendix 3 lists the institutions involved in training English teachers and gives sample figures of students studying and graduating as teachers.

In-service training

Despite the growth of teacher-training facilities (in the 1960s the IUPC was the only institution graduating English teachers), many teachers currently engaged in TEFL in the school system are not graduates in English. Normally staff members whose field of work has been reduced (e.g. French) are used for English teaching. It is dangerous to generalize about the level of knowledge and skills of this group of teachers (and of others who graduated more than fifteen years ago and have not received any further training); the lack of properly qualified staff is more accute in the rural areas, for example, than in the major cities. However, there is a clear need for in-service training.

In order to meet this need in all areas of education, the Instituto de Mejoramiento Profesional was created some twenty years ago. This offers serving teachers the possibility of obtaining a qualification by correspondence combined with intensive summer courses at the institute's centres. However, the course offered in English - which had come under criticism for being out of date and below the standard of the regular teacher-training institutions - has now been dropped, and the institute limits itself, in the field of English as a foreign language (EFL), to weekend workshops and seminars. These events, often organized in conjunction with existing bodies like the British Council or the UCV School of Modern Languages, are primarily aimed at familiarizing teachers with the communicative methodology necessary for implementing the new syllabus in basic school.

This type of occasional in-service training is also provided by other institutions. Most of the language departments mentioned above offer extension courses in the form of conferences, seminars or series of workshops. For example, the IUPC has held over fifteen such courses in a wide range of applied linguistics topics since 1980, while the UCV School of Modern Languages has run four week-long national seminars during the same period. These included (in 1987) an ESP course co-sponsored by the British Council, and led by two Reading University specialists. The Council's overall role in in-service training is discussed below.

Postgraduates in English teaching

The proportion of staff members in higher education language departments who have postgraduate qualifications is increasing: an MA is required for promotion beyond assistant lecturer (profesor asistente) level. Until the economic crisis in Venezuela, it was more common for such people to have followed postgraduate studies abroad since the only course available in Venezuela was a theoretical MA in linguistics taught mainly in Spanish (e.g. at the Universidad de Zulia (LUZ)). Now, however, the paucity of scholarships available for overseas studies has led to a growth of postgraduate work in this area inside the country. The Universidad del Oriente (UDO) has introduced an MA in TEFL; and the UCV has an MA in the pipeline. An idea of the topics covered by such courses can be gleaned from the IUPC syllabus outline (copies available from the British Council's English Teaching Information Centre (ETIC), Central Information Service, 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1A 2BN). In addition, the UCV School of Languages has set up an agreement with Birmingham University, partly sponsored by the British Council, permitting its own English teachers to take a sandwich MA in Britain at Birmingham University.

British Teachers of English

Generally speaking, English teachers are Venezuelan, particularly in schools, with the sole exception of English-medium institutions. At the tertiary level there are several British and other expatriate teachers of English language and literature, especially in Caracas. For example, at the IUPC there are three British teachers (two full-time and one part-time) while at the USB there are several Americans and one British teacher. However, there are only two native speakers (one British, one American) of the sixteen staff members in the English department at the UCV School of Modern Languages, but many of the other teachers have strong British links through personal ties or postgraduate work done there. Venezuelans now teaching in higher education who have studied in the UK (often on British Council scholarships) tend to remain loyal to the British approach to TEFL. The results of this influence can be seen in the methodology and materials used in the EFL classroom at the tertiary level.

The teaching of literature

The teaching of literature is restricted to higher education and the English-medium schools (see section 7), since English literature does not form part of the Venezuelan school curriculum. There is no literature component in the official English programmes at school level. The only teaching of literature at this stage of education takes place in the foreign schools (which do not follow the Ministry of Education syllabus) and also in a handful of private schools. At the tertiary level, British and Commonwealth literature form parts of the syllabuses where English is taken as the major subject, namely the university schools of modern languages and the teacher training university institutes. In addition, English literature is taught in translation in the School of Letters at universities such as LUZ, ULA and UCV. In these cases, literature is a separate discipline rather than part of a language studies programme. Where English is an instrumental language, literature does not figure in the curriculum, with the sole exception of the Universidad Simón Bolivar (USB) where students can choose literary courses (taught in English) within the general studies programme, to fulfil optional credit requirements.

As mentioned earlier, teacher training courses in EFL invariably include a literature element, and it has become apparent that there are insufficient numbers of appropriately trained staff to implement these programmes. In response to this deficiency, the IUPC is designing an M.Ed in the teaching of English literature specifically aimed at prospective teachers in teacher-training situations in Venezuela.

The following information refers exclusively to teacher-training institutions and universities where English is studied as the main subject and where literature is an integral component of language studies leading to a degree qualification as a teacher (profesor) or (in the case of the UCV) as an interpreter and translator.

Literature courses

The status of literature within the overall programme varies considerably from one institution to another. In the Universidad Metropolitana for example, there are eight compulsory literary courses, whilst in the UCV School of Modern Languages, literature does not comprise a separate subject in its own right but is included as a major component of each one of the six culture, themes and texts courses. Similarly literature is also a part of 'culture of the English-speaking world' in the IUPC, though there are also three courses dedicated exclusively to literature, and students may in addition choose electives on literary topics. Normally there are two compulsory semesters of literature, with classes averaging three or four hours a week, and several possible options.

The areas covered by such courses and the content of the syllabuses also vary widely. Decisions about which authors to study, within the limits of subject specifications, are in the hands of individual teachers. The subject teacher is also responsible for the particular approach taken to the texts, and again there is considerable variation. Some teachers prefer a fairly traditional, chronological treatment, based either on literary movements, schools of criticism or socio-historical epochs. Others view these courses in relation to the students' language studies and see literature as a vital factor in learning about language use, diversity and creativity. In such cases, there may be a concentration on linguistic analyses of the texts, including discourse analysis techniques.

Apart from the determining role of the individual teacher's attitude to literature, recent trends in linguistics and TEFL theory and practice are beginning to influence the position of literature in language studies in Venezuela. Two recent developments serve to illustrate the growing recognition of the value of literature to the language learner in general, and the future teacher of English in particular.

Firstly, all the teacher-training university institutes have reached an agreement, prior to their integration under the new UPEL, to follow a single plan of studies in the first six semesters of their curriculum (which comprises ten semesters in total). The compulsory English literature component in the modern languages departments will consist of three courses of three credits each, totalling approximately two hundred and forty hours of study. Optional courses will also be offered but these will vary from one institute to another.

Secondly, as a result of a survey carried out by IUPC staff covering the majority of institutions where English is a main subject of study, it was found that there was a lack of trained teachers of literature despite the fact that in all these institutions literary courses were compulsory. The majority of staff engaged in the teaching of literature are, moreover, expatriate (British, American, Chilean etc.), trained before their arrival in Venezuela. Given this state of affairs, the IUPC Modern Languages Department has planned an MA in the teaching of English literature. It plans to offer this MA intermittently in response to institutional needs. The emphasis throughout the syllabus will be on the interrelated nature of language and literary studies.

Professional associations

In addition to the Instituto de Mejoramiento Profesional and the language department extension courses, English teachers can also update their skills by attending events organized by associations connected with TEFL. A National Convention of English Teachers held every year at the Barquisimeto Teacher Training Institute (though the venue may be changed in the future), while part of the Venezuelan Association of Linguists' annual conference is dedicated to talks and workshops in the field of EFL. The Venezuelan branch of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is significant in this area, and has seven hundred members, many of whom are Venezuelan high school teachers. A three-day national convention attended by over five hundred participants is held every year in May with well-known speakers from the United States. TESOL also produces a newsletter three times a year. At the same time, other organizations less directly concerned with English teaching nevertheless carry out work that is often related to this area. In this respect it is worth mentioning the Group for Investigation into Terminology (GIT) at the USB language department; the Centre for Translation and Interpretation (CIT) which has its headquarters at the UCV School of Modern Languages; and the Venezuelan Association for the Advance of Science (ASOVAC), whose conferences sometimes include presentations on issues related to applied linguistics.

4 Materials support

General availability of materials

Since the collapse of the bolivar in 1983, imported books have become considerably more expensive, with prices between five and ten times as high as five years ago. As a consequence of the inevitable fall in demand, bookshops have been obliged to reduce their supplies of English-language books. A battle is being fought by the bookshops, along with the academic community, to persuade the government to permit the importing of books at a special exchange rate (which exists for certain priority goods), but there is no indication that present policy will change - in part, because the national publishing industry has been stimulated as a result of these recent events.

An extreme example of the consequences of the economic crisis is the closing-down of one of the principal suppliers of English language textbooks in Caracas, Helpful Bookshop, which was an outlet for eight British publishing houses in the country. This leaves two English-bookshops in the capital, The American Bookshop in Altamira and The English Bookshop in Concresa, which manage to survive by dealing in commercial videos. Other bookshops, such as Libreria Mundial in the city centre, have supplies of language teaching texts covering both general English and the most common ESP specialities. However stocks tend to be somewhat irregular in terms of variety of texts and quantity of copies, whilst ordering from abroad invariably takes several months.

In the circumstances, it is not surprising that teachers increasingly resort to photocopying colleagues' books to keep up to date with the latest publications. Language teachers are frequently obliged to distribute copies of their own books to their students in the absence of available, or reasonably priced, texts in the shops. In the long term, this situation could lead to an increasing reliance on older material. The British Council library's recent policy of specializing in English (rather than attempting to cover all subjects), should provide a useful resource for teachers. However it has to adhere strictly to copyright rules and this may limit its appeal.

Educational texts

The Ministry of Education only gives its approval to texts written by Venezuelan authors, so that the state system is virtually closed to British publishers of English-language textbooks. With the recent adoption of a functional programme for basic school, many school books on the market now advertise themselves as being appropriate for this new approach. However only a minority of these texts has been designed specifically with communicative teaching in mind; for the most part, well-established books have been modified and re-edited to fit in with a syllabus based on functions, while still retaining an underlying organization revolving around language structures. Titles include Study English, Better English, Hello and My first English book. All of these are readily available from bookshops at moderate prices (50-100 bolivars).

Nevertheless, at least one set of texts - Yours, produced by IUPC teachers and written specifically to meet the requirements of the new programme - has now been marketed, and it is expected that more will soon follow.

Unlike the public sector, private schools can select books published abroad. There is little evidence, however, that the latest publications are used in these institutions. An example of a typical text used in this sector is G.L. Alexander's Look, listen, learn! In many cases American course books are chosen.

In most of the higher educational institutions where English is a major rather than an instrumental subject, the communicative approach was adopted in the early 1980s. Since that time, functionally organized books such as the Strategies series (Longman) have formed the basis for early training in the language. There has, however, always been a tendency towards eclecticism in materials selection in these institutions, with teachers increasingly preparing their own materials using authentic texts, a trend likely to continue in the future because of problems mentioned earlier with imported books. A rich variety of imaginative material is produced in this way in higher education, though the quality of presentation and reproduction tend to suffer from lack of facilities and funds.

In the area of instrumental English, the scene is more difficult to describe because of the large number and types of institutions and individuals involved. It sometimes happens, for example, that a university or technical college department has only one English teacher attached to it, and the type of material used or produced depends on that individual's experience and capabilities. Several ESP teachers in Venezuela however do design their own materials using authentic texts.

Other physical resources

In the tertiary sector most teacher training colleges and university languages departments have language laboratories, though the size and quality of these facilities vary greatly from one institution to another. For example, the IUPC has eight language laboratories in excellent condition, each with booths for about thirty students. They include a video-room and a laboratory specifically for students to use outside class hours. On the other hand, the inadequacy of the installations at the UCV School of Modern Languages provoked a two-month strike by the students in 1987. However, few state schools, and only the wealthiest ones in the private sector, have language laboratories. Though by no means all commercial language institutions offer laboratory equipment, those that do place great emphasis on the benefits of such facilities (see section 7).

The same situation pertains with regard to video-cassette facilities (the use of reel films for educational purposes seems to have almost died out in Venezuela). In the more privileged institutions it is not unusual for English departments to build up small libraries of their video copies, whereas it is equally common to find teachers in less favourable circumstances taking students home to see films. Both the British Council and the US Embassy have useful libraries of non-commercial cassettes ranging from socio-political documentaries to full-length plays. The former offers viewing to medium-sized groups on its premises, whilst the latter provids a cassette-copying service. It should be noted that British cassettes are incompatible with the video sets used in Venezuela.

5 Educational administration in relation to English teaching

Many of the points pertinent to the administration of education have already been covered in sections 2 and 3 where the overall control exercised by the Ministry of Education was described. Section 5 is limited to clarifying the main decision-making and policy-implementing channels within the system, of relevance to the field of EFL.

Administration of primary and secondary education

The general structure of the Ministry of Education is shown in diagram 2 on the next page.

The planning and budgetary sectorial office within the Ministry is in charge of educational planning. The most important component of this office with regard to teaching policy is the curricular division, divided into areas of co-ordination for the major subjects. The languages co-ordinator within this division is thus the person with direct responsibility for changes in the English curriculum in schools, e.g. the introduction of the new basic school syllabus. At the same time, he/she liaises with the director of basic education and the heads of the twenty-three educational zones to implement policies. Working with the zonal heads, educational supervisors are responsible for ensuring that policy implementation takes place satisfactorily at school level. The supervisors themselves are trained (and retrained or updated) by the Instituto de Mejoramiento Profesional and, like the institute, play an important role in organizing in-service training. This structure is summarized in diagram 3.

Diagram 2: Administrative structure of the Venezuelan Ministry of Education (source: Memoria y Cuenta. Republica de Venezuela, 1986)

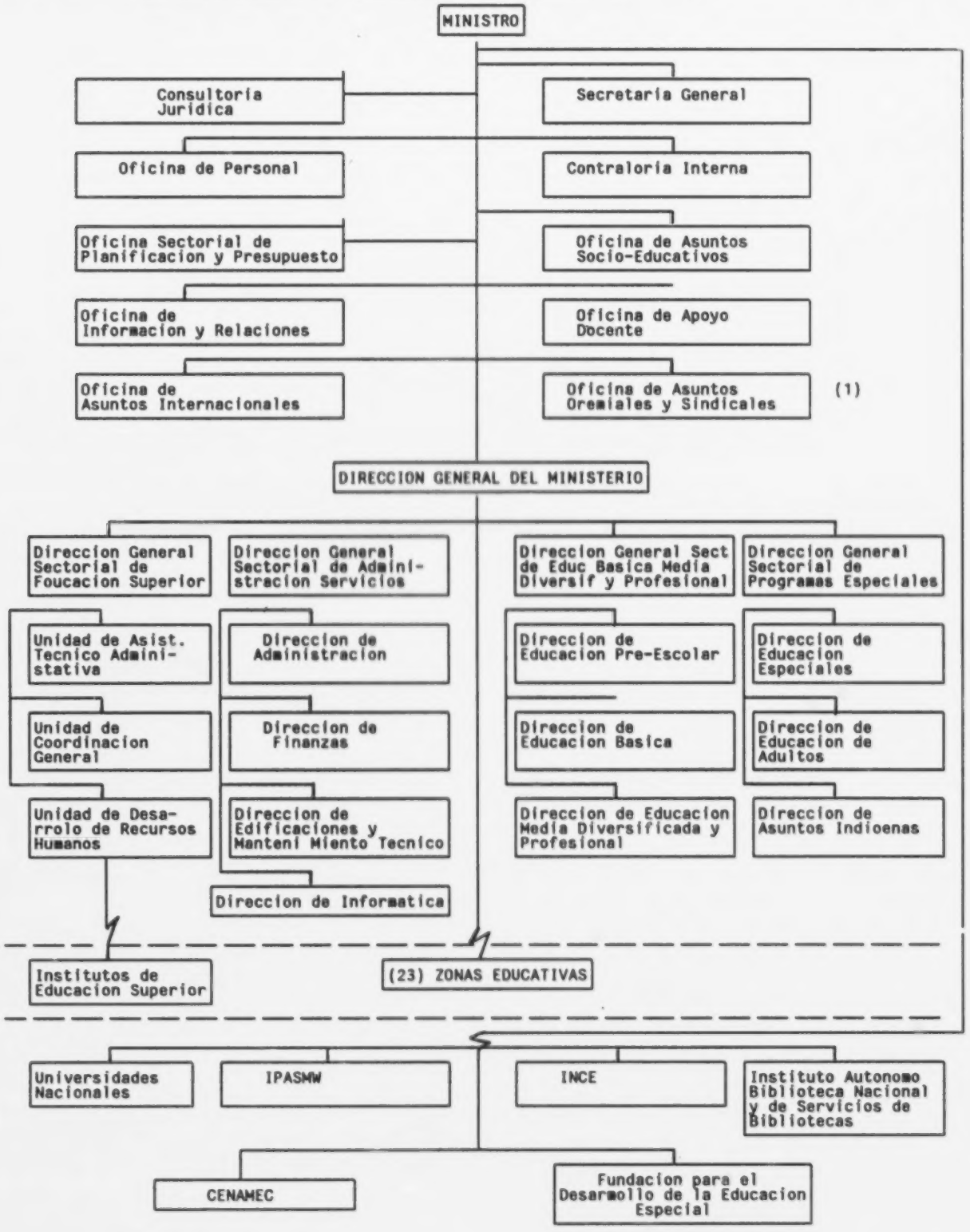
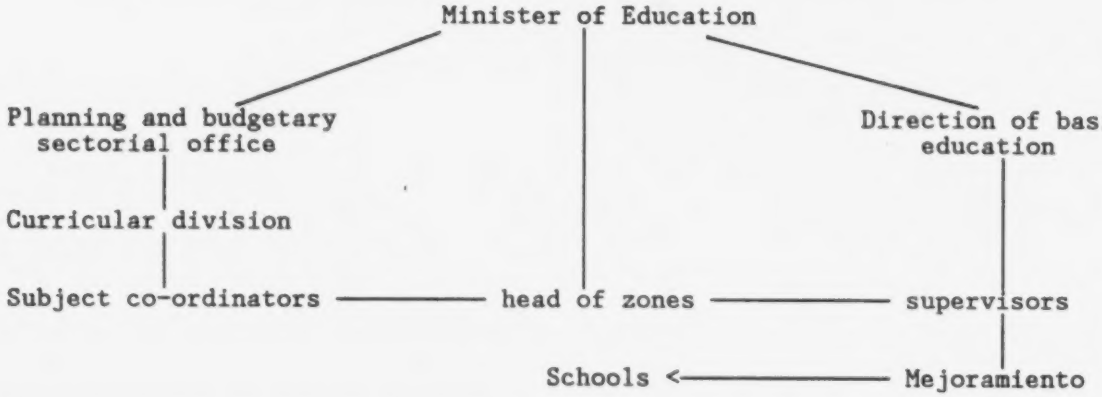

MINISTRO
Consultoria Juridica
Secretaria General
Oficina de Personal
Contraloria Interna
Oficina Sectorial de Planificacion y Presupuesto
Oficina de Asuntos Socio-Educativos
Oficina de Informacion y Relaciones
Oficina de Apoyo Docente
Oficina de Asuntos Internacionales
Oficina de Asuntos Oremiales y Sindicales
(1)
DIRECCION GENERAL DEL MINISTERIO
Direccion General Sectorial de Foucacion Superior
Direccion General Sectorial de Administracion Servicios
Direccion General Sect de Educ Basica Media Diversif y Profesional
Direccion General Sectorial de Programas Especiales
Unidad de Asist. Tecnico Administativa
Direccion de Administracion
Direccion de Educacion Pre-Escolar
Direccion de Educacion Especiales
Unidad de Coordinacion General
Direccion de Finanzas
Direccion de Educacion Basica
Direccion de Educacion de Adultos
Unidad de Desarrolo de Recursos Humanos
Direccion de Edificaciones y Manteni Miento Tecnico
Direccion de Educacion Media Diversificada y Profesional
Direccion de Asuntos Indioenas
Direccion de Informatica
Institutos de Educacion Superior
(23) ZONAS EDUCATIVAS
Universidades Nacionales
IPASMW
INCE
Instituto Autonomo Biblioteca Nacional y de Servicios de Bibliotecas
CENAMEC
Fundacion para el Desarmollo de la Educacion Especial

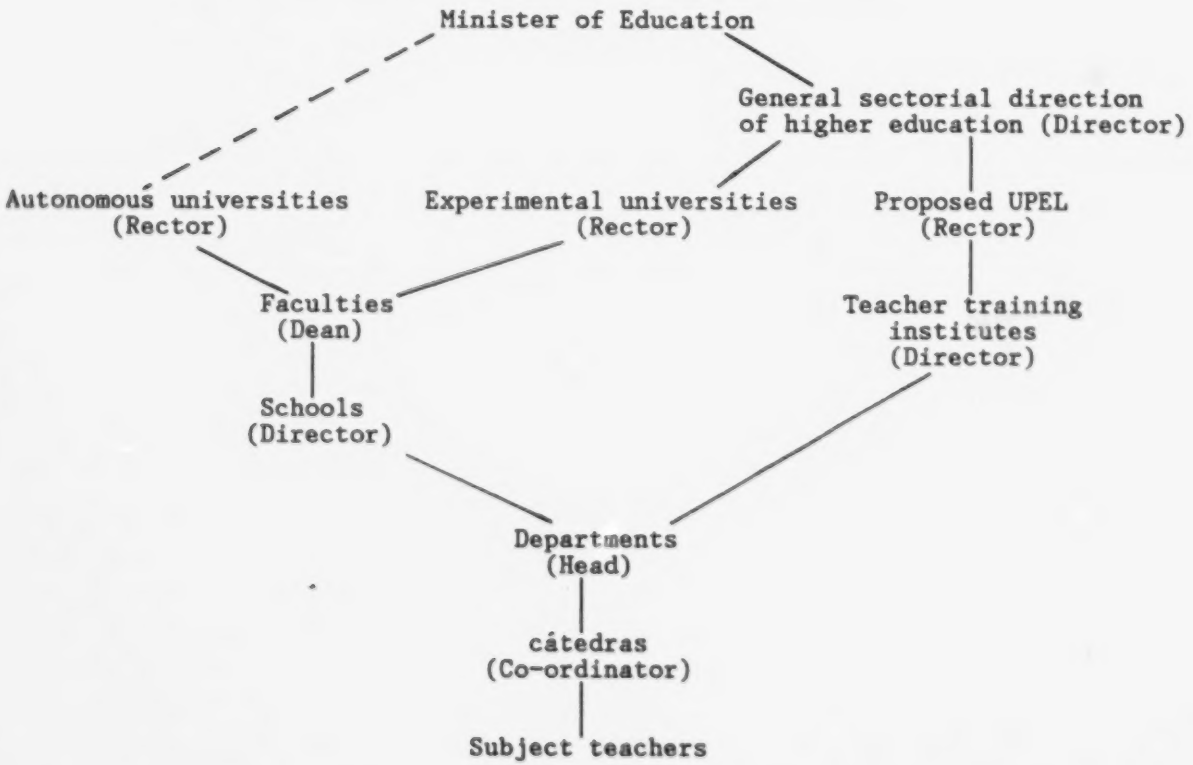
Diagram 3: The administration of primary and secondary education



Administration of higher education

As stated in section 2, the five older universities have a greater degree of autonomy with respect to the Ministry than the rest of the state sector institutions at the tertiary level. These are overseen by the general sectorial direction of higher education. In all higher education bodies however, the most important administrative body is the respective institution's council, composed of the leading authorities within the institution and a number of elected teacher and student representatives. At the next level down, the university faculties and schools each have their councils, with important decisions going to the university council for approval. In the case of the teacher-training institutions, the next level is the department. In both universities and teacher-training institutions, departments are divided into 'cátedras' (areas) with their respective co-ordinators. Thus an EFL programme change in a particular subject might be proposed at the cátedra level and discussed in a department meeting, while more important curriculum changes at university would go through the school council to the faculty. On the other hand, global policy decisions with respect to language teaching, such as which institutions are authorized to graduate English teachers, emanate from the Ministry. This process is outlined in diagram 4.

Diagram 4: Administration of higher education



The administrative status of instrumental English varies from one institution to another, depending mainly on its academic importance in the main course of study. Thus English may be merely a subject within a cátedra, within a department (general studies, for example) or a department in its own right - or at least the major component of a language department. In the last-named case, there is the possibility of applying a relatively common approach to EFL throughout the institution, as at the USB. In the other cases, co-ordination across the board is much less frequent, though the UCV faculty of humanities does have a co-ordinator of instrumental language teaching.

The holders of the ministerial posts with responsibility for the planning of English (the language co-ordinator and the general sectorial directors for the different levels of education) usually turn to recognized experts in the teacher-training institutions and universities for advice. The ministry officials are political postings but the individuals concerned are more often than not graduates from the above-mentioned institutions and therefore have the necessary background and contacts to seek appropriate assistance. However, it should be noted that these channels are informal, with no official structure for co-operation ensuring the continuous interchange of ideas.

Regarding the future position of English within the system, there seems to be no danger of the language losing its privilege position at the different levels of education. The emphasis on English as an auxiliary instrument of international communication and giving access to technological and scientific information will most likely continue. This is despite the more humanistic approach gaining ground in other areas of the curriculum.

6 Development and planning of the teaching of English

Although free universal education was officially decreed by Guzmán Blanco in 1876, the concept only existed on paper until the advent of democracy. In practice, before 1959 the educational system served principally to preserve the power of the ruling elite, a tradition stretching back to the Spanish Conquest and continuing after independence through a series of more or less autocratic regimes up to the military dictatorship of Pérez Jiménez in the 1950s. The immediate educational concern of the Spanish Crown in the sixteenth century was to impose the Spanish language and the Catholic religion on the native Indians. The religious orders in charge of this mission, such as the Franciscans and the Dominicans, dominated the education scene for the first two centuries of colonial rule and their influence, can still be seen in the relatively large number of private schools run by priests and nuns. A more secular education began to emerge in the eighteenth century with the need to incorporate the 'criollos' (Venezuelan-born whites) into the administrative cogs of the colonial apparatus. Though small in size, this movement was significant since, paradoxically, it gave confidence and coherence to the generation of Venezuelans, led by Simón Bolívar, who liberated the country from Spanish rule in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The liberation epoch produced several figures whose profound and imaginative thoughts on education continue to influence educational philosophy in Venezuela today. The humanistic writings of men like Bolívar himself, his teacher Simon Rodriguez and Andres Bello show an awareness of the necessity to use education to create a Latin American identity to fill the cultural vacuum left by the expulsion of the Europeans, and to work towards democracy and social equality. Their ideals, however, had to wait a hundred and fifty years for anything approaching realization: the political instability that characterized Venezuela in the nineteenth century meant that educational advances proceeded piecemeal and did not affect the population at large. Reforms tended to be poor imitations of the European models of the time.

The comparative stability of Venezuela in the first half of this century under the long Gómez dictatorship, coupled with the first signs of growth in urbanization and industralization brought about by the exploitation of the oilfields, led to some expansion in public education but practically no modernization in terms of the objectives and content of the system, which was not orientated towards the practical needs of the changing society. In the old universities however, which managed to retain a tradition of independent thought there emerged a generation of students in the 1930s who were to become the political leaders of the new democratic Venezuela twenty years later. Heavily influenced at first by socialism and communism, by the time they came to power their early radicalism had been tempered into a form of social democracy that was to shape, among other things, the objectives and structure of the modern Venezuelan educational system.

The national constitution of 1961 recognized the right of all citizens to education, considering this necessary both as a guarantee of democratic continuity and as a prerequisite of economic and social development. At the same time, education was seen as the most effective means of eradicating class inequality and stimulating social mobility. Successive governments have pursued these aims through a series of national plans whose principal educational objectives can be encapsulated in the slogans democratización, modernización and desarrollo (development). Venezuela, like other Latin American nations, has sought to channel educational efforts into the production of a workforce qualified to redress the imbalance resulting from the technological advance - and consequent politico-economic dominance of the industrialized countries. Based on the so-called technocratic model of education imported from the USA, the overall purpose of education was to produce an effective skilled workforce. This is reflected in the much higher emphasis on science and technology in higher education.

The simplistic identification of education with technological advance has led to an overproduction of professionals in areas like engineering. However the projections of labour-force requirements made in the petrol-boom of the 1970s have turned out to be widely exaggerated in the recession-dominated 1980s, with the result that many graduates are either unemployed or obliged to work in areas unrelated to their skills. In addition, critics see the technocratic model as excessively behaviouristic, mechanistic and unsuited to the Venezuelan socio-cultural reality.

Realization of the inappropriateness of a wholesale adoption of this model was one of the reasons behind the 1980 Education Act which extended compulsory basic education from six to nine years. The philosophy behind this reform was based on three main criteria: firstly, the view that progress cannot be equated only with the transplantation of foreign technology but must be considered in the light of Venezuela's particular needs and circumstances; secondly the idea that 'development' is an individual as well as a national concept that concerns affective and aesthetic values beyond the mere training of technicians; and thirdly, the search for national identity and integration.

Whether or not the ideal of providing all citizens with an integral basic education can be realized, remains to be seen. It is noteworthy that of the half-a-million students enrolled in the first grade in 1975-6, only sixty per cent finished sixth grade in 1980-1 and only one-third completed ninth grade of basic school. At the same time, the proportions of the education budget assigned to the different levels of education do not reflect the decision to concentrate on the earlier formative years. More funds are channelled into higher education (thirty-three per cent) as compared to basic school (twenty-eight per cent). Further reforms will be necessary as shown by the report of the Presidential Commission on Education (VI Plan de Desarrolli de la Nación, 1981-85) and the proposed new Higher Education Act (Memoria y Cuenta, 1986) cited in the bibliography in section 14.

7 English outside the educational system

Private schools

As mentioned before, the government's policy regarding curriculum is that all Venezuelan children must follow the national syllabuses laid down by the Ministry of Education. This means that in theory the pupils in English medium schools should be children of foreigners temporarily resident in the country. The rules have sometimes been bent to allow entry to Venezuelans as long as they have at least one parent with foreign nationality.

There are five major English-medium schools in Venezuela, only one of which has British connections. This is the British School in Altamira, which operates on the lines of a UK state primary school, with most of the teachers being recruited in Britain. A combination of the economic crisis and a tightening-up of the government regulations concerning Venezuelan nationals, has brought student numbers down to around a hundred pupils, all of them in the five to eleven age range and representing a variety of nationalities. The other four English-medium schools have American links and operate at both the elementary and high school levels. These are two international colleges: Campo Alegre in Caracas and Bella Vista in Maracaibo. They are all affiliated to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; these schools recruit American teachers and are guided by United States policy with regard to general curriculum. Their main function is to prepare students for entry to US higher education institutions, though the international baccalaureate - accepted as a qualification for entry to some European universities - is also offered: for example, at the Caracas International College. Numbers of pupils enrolled range from about four hundred to over eight hundred. Fees average between 4,000 and 5,000 bolivars a month. Like the British School, these institutions are non-profit making and are managed by boards of governors.

One alternative for permanent residents looking for an English-speaking environment for their children, is the bilingual schools, such as the Jefferson and Washington Academies in Caracas. These schools follow the Venezuelan curriculum, but most subjects are taught in English. They also offer English classes after-school hours for pupils studying at other schools. Kindergartens and vacation camps exclusively in English are on the increase. In addition, it is worth mentioning that the more exclusive private Venezuelan schools put great emphasis on English language teaching; whether because of this emphasis, or because of frequent visits to the USA, their students do seem to achieve high levels of fluency. English classes in the higher grades sometimes include the reading of untranslated literary texts. English and American literature is an integral part of the overall programme in the schools where an international curriculum is followed.

Language Schools

There are literally dozens of language institutes of all types and sizes in Caracas and other major cities in Venezuela. A number of these schools advertise frequently in the press. While none of the private institutes has direct affiliation to a British parent body, the Instituto de Inglés Británico competes on a small scale with the British Council in preparing students for the Cambridge first certificate examination (FCE) and Cambridge proficiency examination (CPE). General English courses are offered for beginners (or 'false beginners') and lower intermediate groups. The larger institutions provide more advanced ESP courses on demand (e.g. to would-be tourist guides) and business English eg by the Instituto Loscher-Ebbinghaus. The Berlitz School is the only institute with an international reputation, offering courses in translation-interpreting as well as regular language classes. Most English courses make use of specific methodologies and

techniques, e.g. language laboratories, electronic aids. Most schools offer evening classes, and numbers of students registered at any given time reach 1,000 (in the case of the larger institutes which may have several branches throughout the country). The well-established institutes sometimes employ native English speakers, especially as directors of study, but the majority of teachers are Venezuelan.

There is an increasing number of agencies, operating from offices rather than institutes, that offer semi-specialized courses to companies, banks and government organizations. Companies in computer trading are generally willing to pay for their employees' tuition and to provide time for classes inside working hours. On the other hand, the lucrative government-owned oil sector is nearly completely monopolized by its own educational service, Centro de Formación y Adiestramiento Petrolero y Petroquímico (CEPET).

8 British support for the teaching of English

The English Language Centre at the British Council in Caracas comprises two managerial staff, three administrative staff and some twenty teachers, all native-speakers or long-time UK residents with equivalent fluency. It has eleven classrooms, a language laboratory and a computer-assisted language learning facility for its four hundred part-time students, who are prepared for the University of Cambridge examinations. The centre is a relatively recent addition to the Caracas English language teaching (ELT) scene, having only opened in 1985. RSA certificate courses are occasionally taught to prospective native-speaking teachers at the centre. Literature courses are not yet offered.

The English Literature and Language Teaching Information Service (ELLTIS) at the British Council offers a specialist lending library service for teachers and students of English. This includes audio and video tapes material as well as graded readers, textbooks, literature, contemporary fiction and learned ELT journals. It holds regular monthly meetings for teachers, who thus have the opportunity to meet visiting specialists or to discuss items of interest.

British teaching materials are not widely used in Venezuela partly as a result of the preponderant American influence, and partly as a result of the effective ban on foreign authors by the public sector.

Other British Council support includes specialist tourists attending the Barquisimeto meeting, running specific seminars and the promotion of university links.

9 American support for the teaching of English

The nearest equivalent at the American Embassy to the Council Representative, is the Cultural Affairs Officer (CAO) commonly called the cultural attaché; however direct support for the teaching of English forms a small part of this person's overall functions than is the case for the British counterpart. The attaché's activities are co-ordinated by the United States Information Service (USIS), whose principal role is the consolidation of cultural links with the country in question. In places like Venezuela, USIS has tended to take the attitude that the encouragement of ELT is somewhat redundant, and the infrastructure to teach it (see below) already exists, with the result that funds are directed more towards cultural exchange programmes.

In the near future, however, the emphasis may shift in favour of ELT, following the recent appointment of a new assistant CAO in Caracas, backed by revitalized interest on the part of the present USIS administration. Increased ties to higher education institutions will come in the form of packets of pedagogical materials, such as the US Studies set on contemporary issues and a wide range

of videos (see also section 4), and through the provision of visiting speakers on socio-political and literary topics. The emphasis here will still be on cultural background information rather than, for example, teaching methodology.

The Embassy acts as a filter for scholarships from organizations such as the Fulbright Commission, and for student and teacher exchanges. Several Venezuelans in ELT posts have studied in or visited the USA in recent years. The cultural attaché also distributes Forum free of charge, a high-quality journal containing the latest developments in ELT from the American perspective.

Although the US Embassy has no language teaching institute of its own, it has official links with the two bi-national centres, the Centro Venezolano Americano (CVA) in Caracas and the Centro Venezolano Americano de Zulia (CEVAZ) in Maracaibo, both of which are nevertheless autonomously run by local governing boards. While in theory these centres exist to promote cultural exchange of all types between the two countries, their main function is to teach English. CVA prepares students for the Georgetown University proficiency examination (ALIGU) and administer exams such as TOEFL for several other North American agencies. The Caracas CVA has an excellent laboratory and a library with 7,500 volumes. With numbers of registered students at well over 1,000, the CVA institutes are regarded as the largest and most established single premise language institutes in the country. Apart from language classes, the centres are used for conferences, seminars and workshops for ELT practitioners, usually organized by the Venezuelan branch of TESOL.

While associations such as TESOL enable professionals from many parts of the country to keep in touch with each other and with recent developments, in remote areas the only effective English language influence comes from North American evangelical groups, e.g. the New Tribes. The whole thrust of their pedagogical efforts (in English, Spanish or the Native Indian language, depending on the circumstances) is aimed at providing access to the Bible to Indian tribes. Their activities have caused considerable controversy in Venezuela.

On the whole there is little Anglo-American co-operation at the institutional level. This is partly because there is a tendency for ELT departments in higher education to be biased disproportionately towards either UK or US influences. Whilst most American, or American-influenced, teachers have now generally adopted aspects of the communicative approach and those with a British background have at least heard of Krashen, most would be hard-put to name more than one or two applied linguists on the opposite side of the Atlantic. Prejudices can in part be explained by traditions of overall American hegemony in this part of the world on the one hand, and by pride in recent British leadership in the field on the other.

10 Other agency support

As Venezuela is not considered an aid-worthy country there is little to report in this area. However, it is believed that the Canadian government plans to offer scholarships to enable Venezuelan teachers of English to improve their skills and study elements of Canadian culture in that country.

11 Commercial opportunities

The average Venezuelan individual or institution does not at present have the money available to pay for materials and services at UK prices. The prohibitive cost of imported books and other teaching aids has been commented on in section 4 as has the Ministry of Education's regulations concerning school texts of foreign origin. In the case of very popular texts for use

outside the state school system, British publishers could consider the possibility of having their books reprinted by Venezuelan publishing houses. The opportunities for selling British teaching materials and equipment are bleak; this is especially highlighted by the incompatibility of UK video-cassettes with American video hardware in the field of educational technology. The outlook for computer-assisted language learning systems is more promising, since there has been a boom in personal computers recently.

The situation is not much brighter in the market for services. Language departments at the tertiary level are keen to invite visiting experts but their institutions are unwilling to meet the expenses. As has been pointed out, the flow of scholarship students to the UK in the TEFL field has almost dried up (excluding the British Council funding), while individuals seeking to improve their English at summer schools in the UK are few and far between: there is no longer a flood of airlines promoting package deals involving language courses in the vacations, and language schools in the UK do not publicize their services in Venezuela today.

On the other hand, the financial circumstances that have made studying abroad difficult, have in consequence led to an increased need for English classes inside the country. For example, the British Council has established a language institute (see section 8) in Caracas despite the recession; however the Council - understandably - caters for the upper end of the market and its fees are out of the reach of the average Venezuelan. There would be possible openings here for private organizations or individuals wishing to set up medium-priced language schools in the big cities, though one doubts whether profits would be enormous when translated back into pounds at the present exchange rate. Much the same applies to teacher-training services; the need for these has already been discussed, but it is not likely that this area would be a commercially lucrative one.

12 Creative writing

According to the latest figures the literacy rate is ninety per cent, but the reading of the average Venezuelan is limited to newspapers and magazines (similar to that of the UK). Occasionally, however, novels like El Pais Portatil by Gonzalez Leon or Los Amos del Valle by Herrera Luque become bestsellers. Public libraries are few and far between and, unlike the National Library and libraries in higher education institutions, tend to see their main function as stimulating the habit of reading in young people through the provision of books by well-known Venezuelan writers and on topics related to school studies. Government support for literature is channelled through Consejo Nacional de la Cultura (CONAC) and, less directly, various foundations like the Fundacion Casa de Bello and the recently created Fundación Romulo Gallegos. Several organizations offer annual prizes for literary writing. The local theatre scene is flourishing: most works are by Venezuelan or other Spanish-speaking dramatists although adaptations of plays by Shakespeare and Ben Jonson have been performed (in Spanish) in the last year and received a great deal of public and critical attention.

On the whole the educated Venezuelan is more interested in Latin American writers and, to a lesser extent European authors with whom they share a common intellectual and artistic history (notably the Spanish, but also the French and Italians). Modern North American writers tend to be better known than British ones and there is very little acquaintance with Commonwealth authors.

Despite the high position of English literature in teacher-training courses, (see section 2) there are few associations of literature teachers or conferences specifically dedicated to English literature or literature teaching. However, papers dealing with these topics are read as part of the

annual conferences of both the Association of English Teachers and the Association of Venezuelan Linguists (see section 14). Talks given by visiting writers, invited by agencies such as USIS, are usually well attended.

There are virtually no creative writers in English in Venezuela. Venezuelan literature itself is rich and varied, with several writers who have established international reputations. A few of these have been translated into English: novelists Romulo Gallegos, Miguel Otero Silva and Adriano Gonzalez Leon; short story writers Julio Garmendia, Salvador Garmendia and José Balza; and poets Vicente Gerbasi and Rafael Cadenas. It is worth mentioning that Gallegos's Canaima was translated in 1986 (under the auspices of the North American-Venezuelan Friendship Association) by Jaime Tello, who has also translated Venezuelan poetry into English. Local poets Hanni Ossot and Jorge Nunes have translated English poets into Spanish.

Literary journals in English are not generally available from bookshops, but they can be consulted at the British Council, and the American Embassy gives away its back numbers. New work by major writers in English is reviewed in the Sunday literary supplements of the national papers (for example, El Nacional and El Universal) and in the literary journals (such as Imagen and Zona Franca). These publications are, of course, mainly dedicated to short stories, poems, novel extracts and critical articles of Venezuelan and other Spanish-speaking writers. University and teacher-training institute Departments of Letters also publish literary periodicals. There are several writers' associations, including the Asociacion de Autores Venezolanos and a local chapter of the Pen Club.

English fiction bestsellers are popular and the most commonly sold literature in bookshops. A few bookshops stock recognized literary works (especially Penguin editions) in English, such as the English Bookshop, the American Bookshop, Lectura and Libreria del Ateneo (all of them in Caracas). The last-named bookshop also stocks literary criticism in English. Libreria Mundial in the city centre used to import school-type editions of literary texts but the present financial situation has made this unviable.

Venezuela's economic crisis has led to difficulties in obtaining books published abroad. The constant cry of writers, teachers and intellectuals in general is that they are becoming cut off from contact with the literary production of other countries and languages. Despite the obvious need for books, it is difficult to see how the supply of literary materials in English could be turned into a commercial venture in the present circumstances. However, some interesting literature related audio-cassette material is available though mostly on loan through libraries. The British Council has several good quality productions of Shakespearian plays, which can be viewed by medium-sized groups of students on its premises. The American Embassy, which offers a cassette-copying service, has videos of interviews with writers such as Norman Mailer and John Updike. The US cultural attaché has also opened up the possibility of 'electronic dialogues' between groups of academics in Caracas and literary personalities in the States.

The British Council Library also stocks literary criticism, critical history, poetry, drama, critical biography, literature proper, ELT texts, graded readers and contemporary fiction. Humour, essays and some of the classical English authors are in short supply. The greatest demand is for drama (mainly Shakespeare) and contemporary fiction. There is also a steady demand for fiction and graded readers from language school students, and for specialist works on linguistics and ELT from teachers. British Book News is the only literary journal currently stocked.

Research into English literature and literature teaching is limited to work produced by individual teachers, usually to fulfil promotion requirements. Though some of this research is of a high standard, papers are written in Spanish and are rarely disseminated outside the individual's institution (except in the case of the annual conferences of certain associations, discussed in the next section). Acquiring recent specialized background reading material for research in English literature is now a real problem.

13 Current research

Most research in English language and literature is carried out in the langugae departments of the universities and teacher-training institutions. Apart from theses for the existing or newly-created postgraduate courses described earlier, research work is closely related to the system of academic preferment at the tertiary level. Promotion depends largely on the presentation of a research paper (trabajo de ascenso) involving some form of original investigation. Masters and doctorate theses can be submitted as trabajos de ascenso, usually in an adapted form (for example, translated into Spanish if they were originally written in English). Although outstanding papers may be recommended for publication, the only copies of such work are kept in the libraries of the respective institutions, which normally also have catalogues of all past research: it should be noted that the UCV Faculty of Humanities is about to publish a catalogue of investigations in the language area in Venezuela. In addition, national and international conferences (such as those mentioned in section 3) as well as seminars and workshops within institutions act as stimuli for research: presentations at such events count in the points scale of the academic preferment system.

Investigation topics range from pure theoretical linguistics at one extreme to EFL classroom techniques at the other. It is worth singling out the work done by Professor Godsuno Chela, a distinguished scholar who co-ordinates the MA in Linguistics at the University of Zulia and who is currently engaged in a study of the process of palatization in Caribbean dialects. Special mention should also be made of Professor Adriana Bolivar, Head of the English Department at the UCV School of Modern Languages, who recently received a doctorate from the University of Birmingham where she specialized in the discourse analysis of newspaper editorials. Under Professor Bolivar's tutorship, department members at the UCV are doing research in the fields of inferences, error analysis, ESP, drama in EFL and the teaching of literature. At the IUPC, investigation is being carried out into language loss, metalinguistic awareness, the reading process, text linguistics and various literary areas. The USB has various ESP projects, including the compilation of terminology data banks, and there is also a study of Caribbean dialectology.

The quality and depth of research varies widely from institution to institution and from one individual to another, but there is undoubtedly a lot of interesting and worthwhile investigation going on. The situation with regard to the inadequate dissemination of this work within the country should improve when the computerized inter-university reference and access service begins to function. In the meantime, some language departments produce journals containing reports on research, but the only one which seems to have achieved a measure of regularity in publication is the UCV's News and views: linguistics and language teaching in Venezuela.

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News and views: lingusitics and language teaching in Venezuela. Universidad Central de Venezuela, Escuela de Idiomas Modernos.

15 **General statement**

In brief, English is the principal foreign language in Venezuela and English teaching is a healthy and stable area of activity both within the state education system and outside it. The need for important sections of the population to master one or more skills in the language with various degrees of competence is recognized at government level and useful as a channel of communication in the private sector for business purposes. The existing problems in teaching the language are partly economic and partly the result of a lack of co-ordination and communication. The country has qualified people working to improve the EFL situation but the help of outside agencies is invaluable and always welcomed.

The future of English teaching in Venezuela is assured mainly becuase of the increasing dependence of developing nations on foreign technology. In countries like Venezuela, whose links to the English-speaking world are recent rather than historical, the predominant demand for English as a means of information exchange could result in a tendency among the coming generation of teachers to view the language as a purely practical and truly international

instrument of communication, divorced from its socio-cultural origins. Indeed, some EFL professionals in Venezuela would regard this development as an inevitable and not necessarily undesirable consequence of market conditions; there are others, though, who feel that a foreign language should be learnt as an integral part of the individual's personal growth and who see in language teaching the opportunity to broaden the students' cultural awareness and their appreciation of the creative possibilities of language itself. The British tradition in TEFL has tended to uphold this perspective.

Appendix 1: Student enrolment in the education system

Comparison of total enrolment (state and private) for 1975-6 and 1985-6

Year	Pre-escolar	Basica	Media	Superior	Adulto	Especial
1975-76	224,600	2,614,463	163,088	221,581	388,967 *	35,236 *
1985-86	561,846	3,539,890	268,580	444,450	486,349	110,605

* These figures apply to 1981-82

Comparison of enrolment for state and private sectors

Year	Pre-escolar	Basica	Media	Superior	Adulto	Especial
Official	475,564	3,091,170	211,171	368,803	443,541	110,605
Private	86,285	448,720	57,409	75,647	42,608 (estimated)	-

Breakdown of enrolment in higher education by type of institution
(Figures in parenthesis indicate number of institutes).

1985-86	Universidades	Institutos Pedagogicos	Institutos Technologicos	Institutos Politechnicos	Colegios Universitarios
Official	280,606 (16)	43,206 (5)	21,505 (10)	7,040 (4)	16,446 (9)
Private	46,028 (9)	905 (1)	23,713 (11)	-	5,001 (4)
Total	326,634	44,111	45,218	7,040	21,447

Source: 1) Anuario Estadistico. Republica de Venezuela, 1985
2) Memoria y Cuenta. Ministerio de Educación, Venezuela, 1986

Appendix 2: Syllabus content outline of the English component of the IUPC teacher training BA degree

Semester	Course	Hours per week per course	Hours per week per Semester
1	English I Practical phonetics I	9 3	12
2	English II Practical phonetics II	9 3	12
3	English III Reading and writing I	9 3	12
4	English IV Reading II Writing II	8 3 3	14
5	English V Reading III Writing III Culture of the English-speaking world Introduction to literature	8 3 3 4 3	21
6	English VI Writing IV Applied linguistics I Twentieth century literature	8 3 4 3	18
7	Phonology I Grammatical analysis I Nineteenth century literature	3 3 3	9
8	Applied linguistics II Phonology II Grammatical analysis II	6 3 3	12
9	Generative phonology Grammatical analysis III Elective I	3 3 3	9
10	Elective II Elective III Elective IV	3 3 3	9

* This outline does not include the pedagogical component.

Appendix 3: Aspects of the training of English teachers in Venezuela

Teacher training institutions

Name of institution	Type	Certificate
1. IUPC (Caracas)	Teacher-training university institutues	'Profesor en Lenguas Extranjeras'
2. IUPEMAR (Maracay)		
3. IUPEMAT (Maturin)		
4. IUPE de Barquisimeto		
5. Universidad Central de Venezuela	Autonomous	'Licenciado en Idiomas Modernos'
6. Universidad Metropolitana	Private	
7. Universidad de Los Andes	Autonomous	'Licenciado en Educación: Mención Lenguas Extranjeras'
8. Universidad del Oriente	Autonomous	
9. Universidad de Zulia	Autonomous	'Licenciado en Educación: Mención Idiomas Modernos'
10. Universidad Simon Rodriguez	Experimental	'Licenciado en Educación: Mención Inglés'

Source: Oportunidades de Estudio en las Instituciones de Educación Superior. Oficina de Planificacion del sector universitario, Consejo Nacional de Universidades, 1987.

Teacher trainees and trainers (sample insititutions)

Name of institution	Average no of English major students (all levels)	Average no of students graduating in English per annum	Average no of teachers in English or modern languages department	Average no of English teachers with post-graduate qualifi-cations	Average no of English teachers with postgraduate in literature
IUPC	425	55	23	15	2
IUPE de Barquisi-meto	400	50	18	9	1
UCV	150	10	13	5	1
LUZ	900	80	17	15	0
USR	100	5	6	5	1

The figures quoted are estimates taken from respective higher education institutes in Venezuela.